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operator output of the vertical pattern to a second fuzzy set "Small" and to a second fuzzy set "Big" and evaluating activation degrees of a second set of fuzzy rules each associated with at least one predefined vertical pattern of vertical Sobel operator outputs.

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 are pending. Claim 11 is being amended. Claims 1-10 and 16-24 were allowed.

Claim 11 was objected to for failing to recite "said step d2" in line 1. Claim 11 is being amended as suggested by the Examiner.

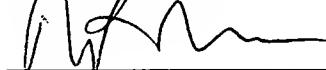
Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version With Markings to Show Changes Made.**"

All of the claims remaining in the application are now clearly allowable. If there are any remaining issues to be resolved, the applicants respectfully request that the Examiner contact the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview. Favorable consideration and a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Massimo Mancuso et al.

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RXI:kkh

Enclosures:

Postcard

Form PTO/SB/21

Form PTO/SB/17 (+copy)

Form PTO/SB/22

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